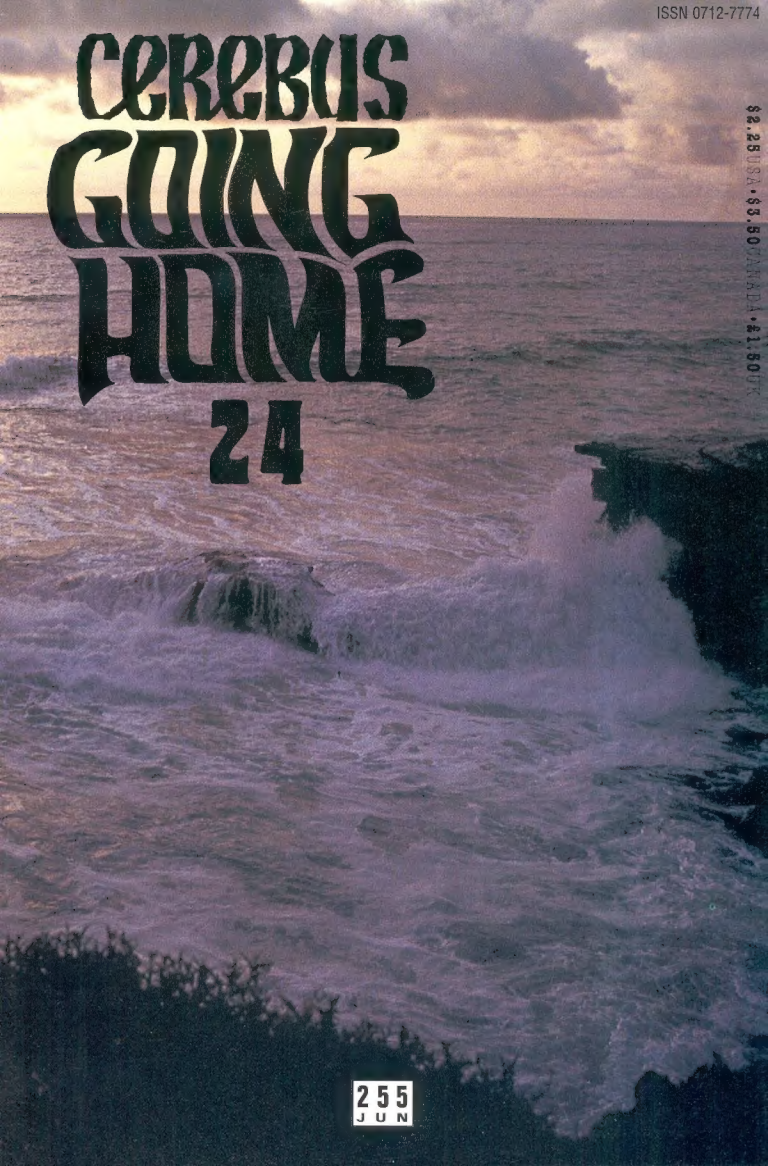
ISSN 0712-7774

# CEREBUS

# GOING HOME

## 24

$2.25USA•$3.50CANADA•£1.50UK



255
JUN

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JUN

ARY WELSH HEMINGWAY
HOW IT WAS
A REMARKABLE WOMAN AND OUR GREATEST WRITER—THEIR EXTRAORDINARY LIFE MADE HEADLINES FOR A GENERATION! "AS HONEST AND REVEALING AS ANYTHING HEMINGWAY EVER WROTE!" —LOS ANGELES TIMES
MARY WELSH HEMINGWAY
". . . is a remarkable woman. She is also a very good writer in her own right."
—Minneapolis Tribune
". . . is a skilled and trained journalist . . . for her big and meaty book she merits our thanks."
—Chicago Daily News
". . . uses effectively the reporter's style she knows best. In this book she faces all the reality of her life . . . as honest and revealing as anything Hemingway ever wrote."
—Los Angeles Times
". . . her book is . . . absorbing . . . exciting . . . fascinating . . . its author was and is a remarkable woman."
—Des Moines Sunday Register
AND HOW IT WAS...
"VIVID . . . LIVELY, HIGHLY INFORMATIVE, PACKED TO THE BRIM . . . SPEEDILY PACED AND WELL WRITTEN."
—Saturday Review
"How It Was deals lovingly with the good times, candidly with the bad . . ."
—The New York Times Book Review
"This memoir is an invitation to a feast . . . the panoply of sport and danger . . . life and vitality and the pleasures of the edge."
—Baltimore Sun
"How It Was is a lovingly written book . . . honestly told with abiding affection—an extremely rewarding reading treat."
—Milwaukee Journal
"Evocative, nostalgic . . . the most authentic memoir about Ernest Hemingway so far published."
—Philadelphia Inquirer
"How It Was is an unbuttoned and yet wryly detached memoir about the 17 buoyant, tumultuous years she shared with Papa."
—Mademoiselle
"Rich, intimate and alive . . . filled with happiness, courage and struggle."
—Dallas Morning News
". . . a book rich in refulgent detail that presents Ernest Hemingway in a more intimate, more honest, more relaxed fashion than any previous book about him . . . it is the testament of a woman who kept her head, her poise and, above all, her independence."
—Chicago Sun-Times
BB
Ballantine/Nonfiction/25432/$2.50

# CEREBUS

NO. 255 JUNE 2000

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Cover photo

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Proofreading

**GOING HOME**

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BOOK ONE
Sudden Moves
(Cerebus 232 to 239)

•

BOOK TWO
Fall and the River
(Cerebus 240 to 250)

•

BOOK THREE
Form & Void
(Cerebus 251 to 265)

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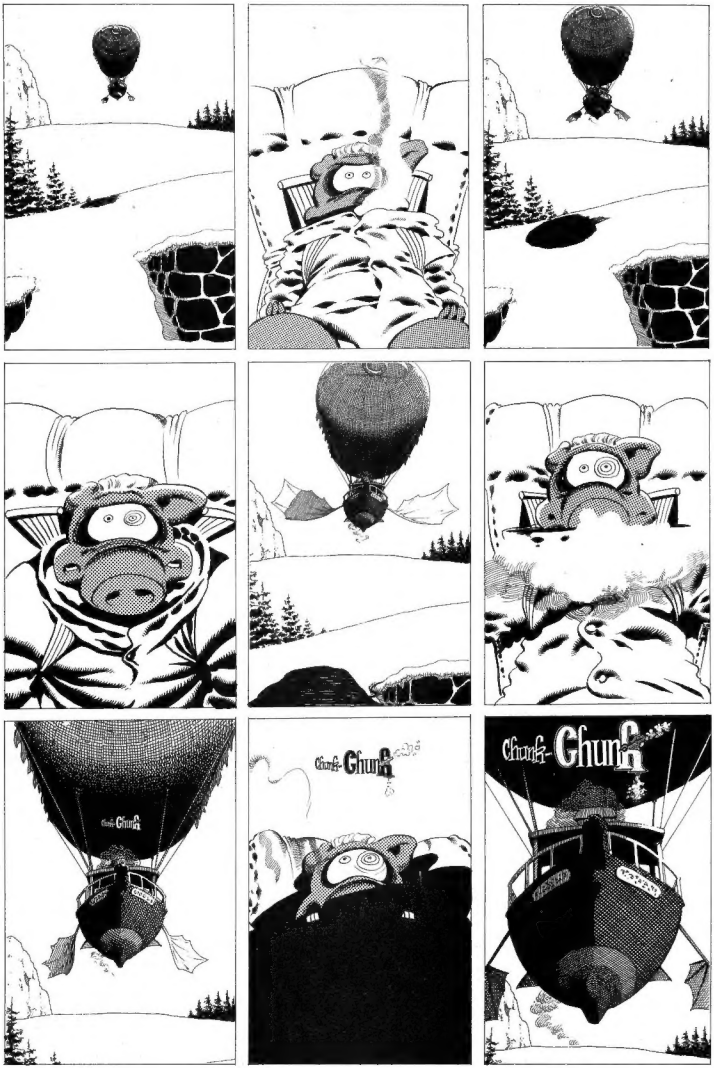
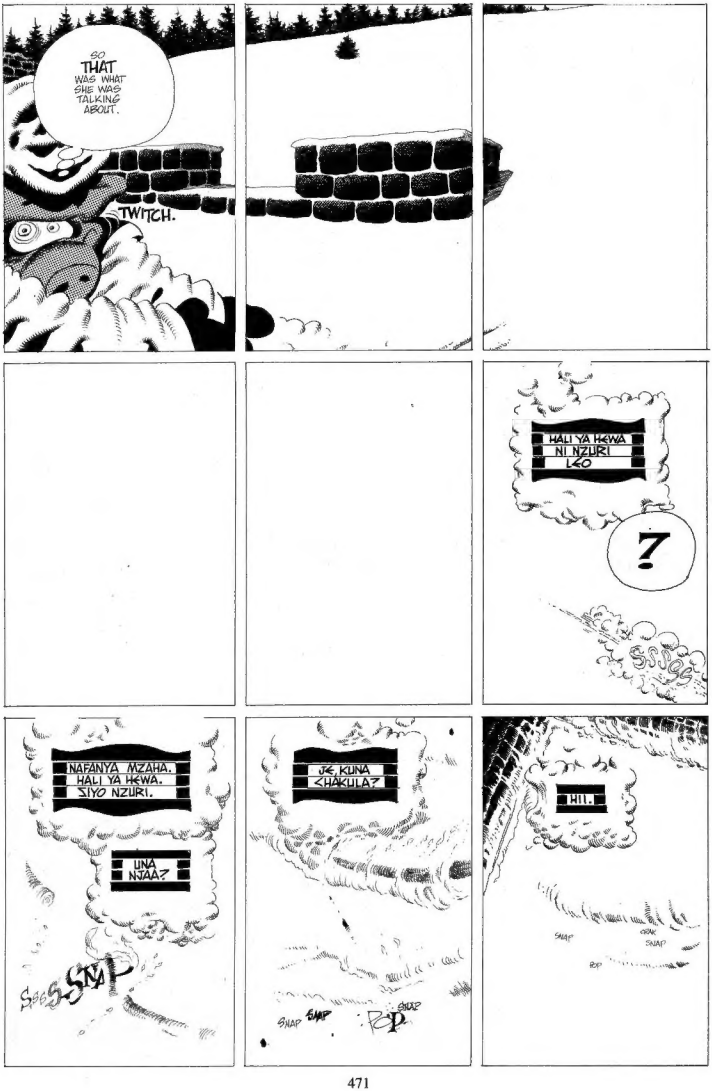
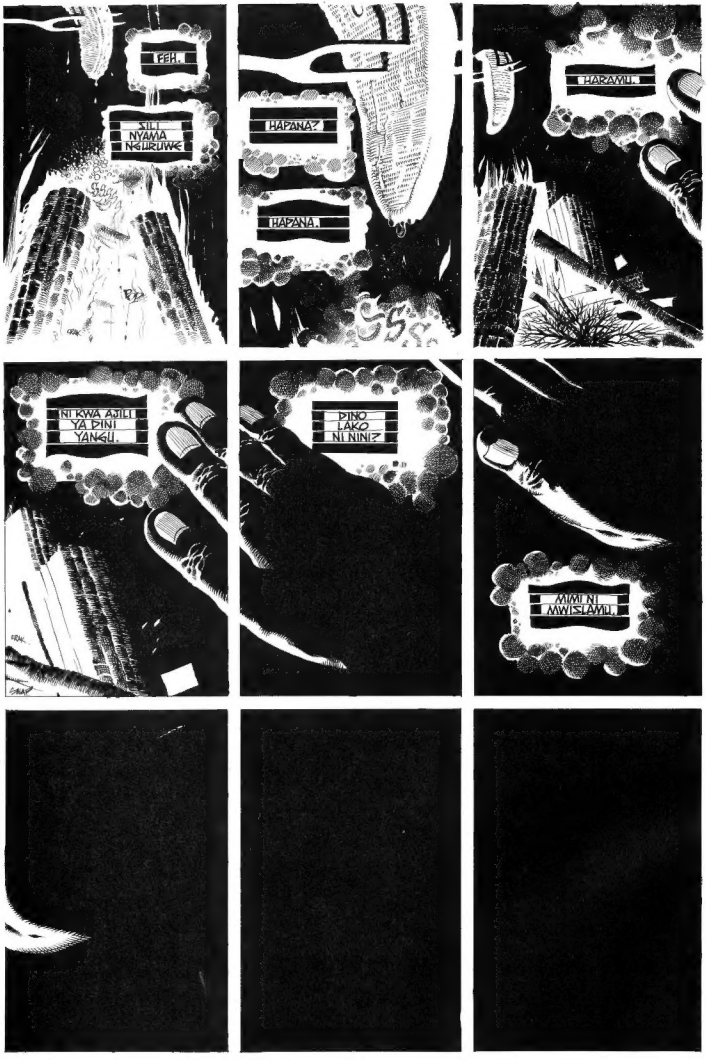

Chunk-Chunk
Chunk-Chunk
Chunk-Chunk

Chunk-
Chunk-
Chunk-
:PLOP:

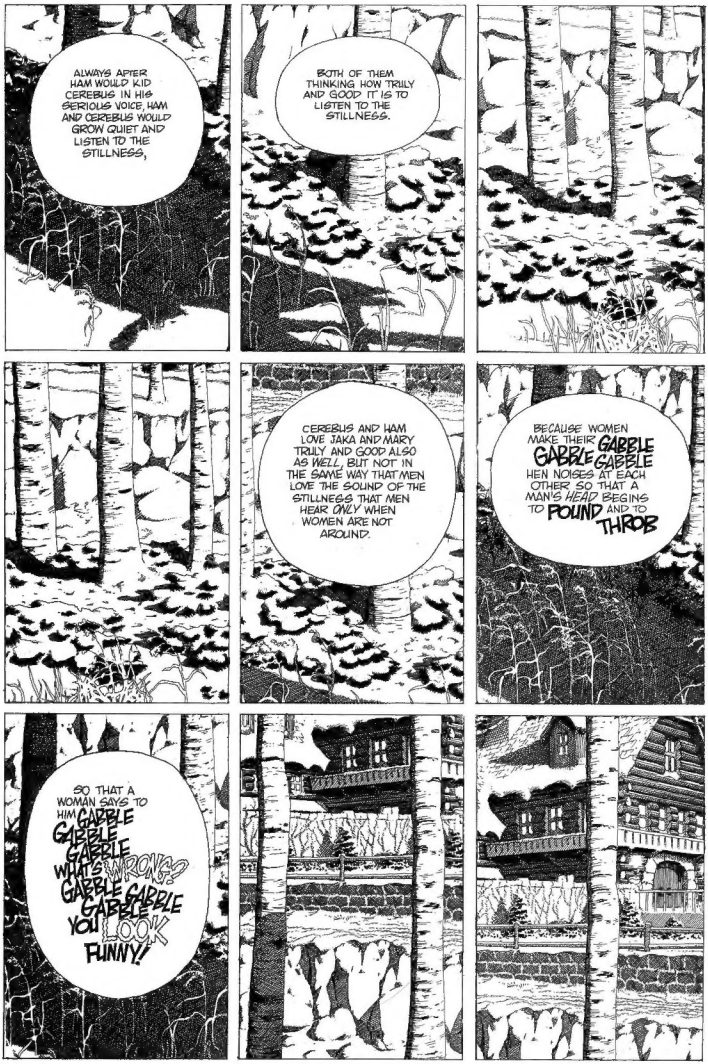
Chunk
Chunk
Chunk
Chunk

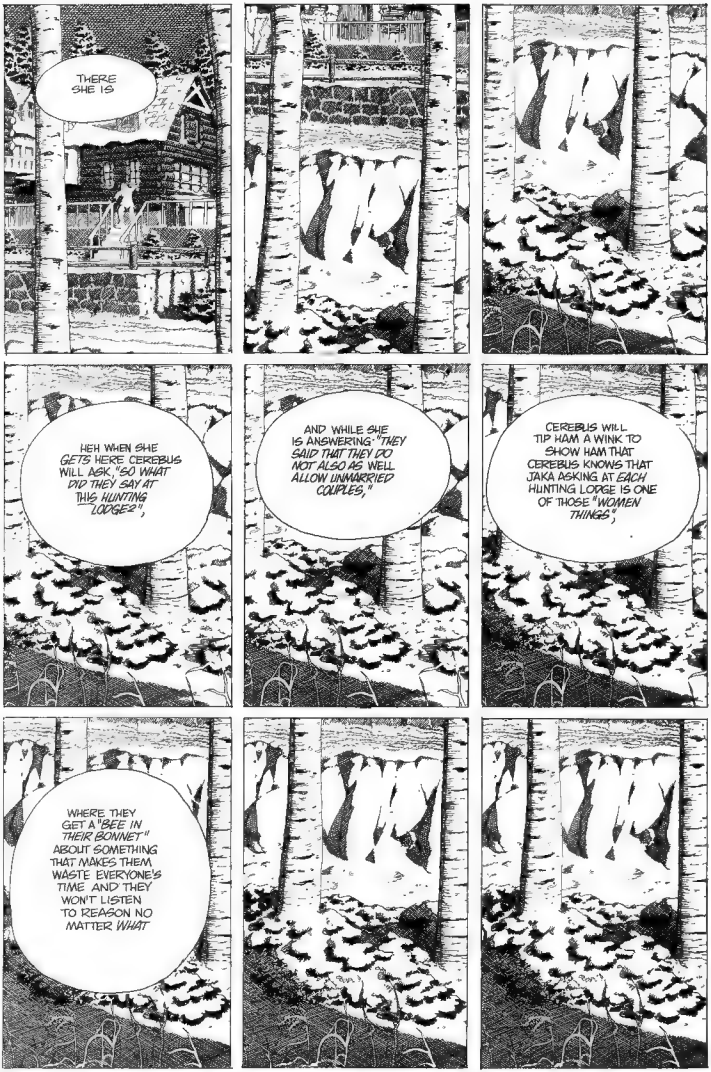
HUVABA
HUB!
HUH
L
L
L
L
H!
So.
He's never seen an AIRSHIP before EITHER.
EVIDENTLY NOT.
NO WONDER YOU GAVE ME SUCH A WEIRD LOOK WHEN I SUGGESTED WE TAKE AN AIRSHIP UP TO YOUR PARENTS' PLACE, CEREBUNNY_

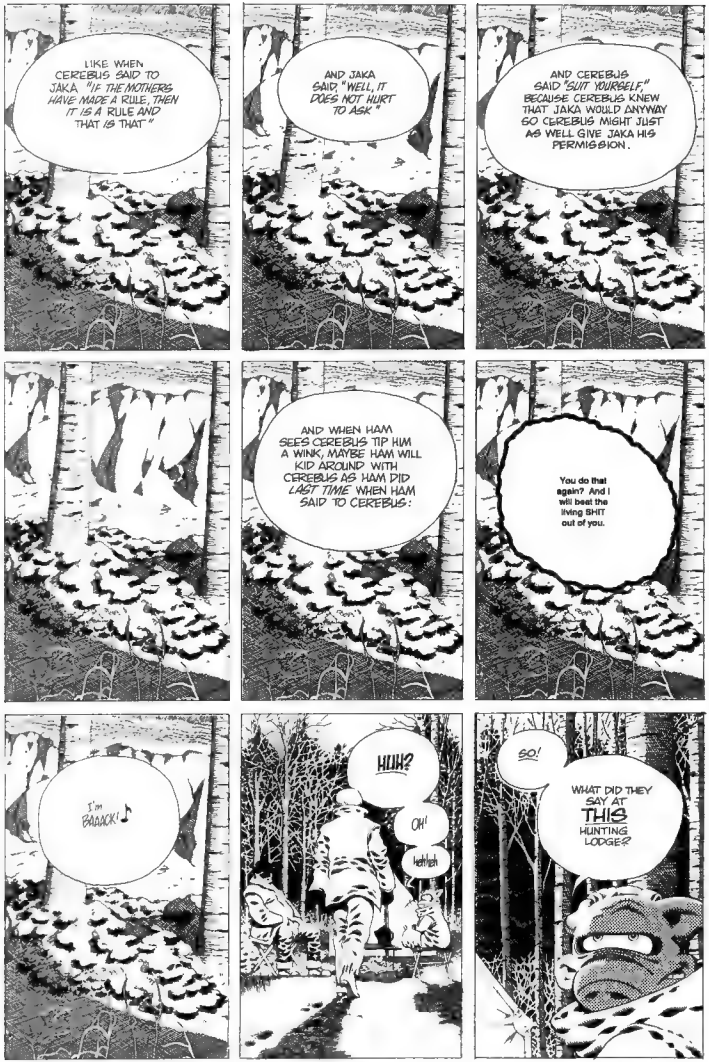

SO THAT WAS WHAT SHE WAS TALKING ABOUT.
TWITCH.
HALI YA HEWA NI NZURI LEO
?
SSSSS
NAFANYA MZAHA. HALI YA HEWA. SIYO NZURI.
UNA NJAA?
SSSSS SNAP
JE, KUNA CHAKULA?
SNAP SNAP BOP SNAP
HII.
SNAP
SNAP
BOP


FEH.
SIJI NYAMA NGURUWE
HAPANA?
HAPANA.
HARAMU.
NI KWA AJILI YA PINI YANGU.
PINO LAKO NI NINI?
MIMI NI MWISLAMU.

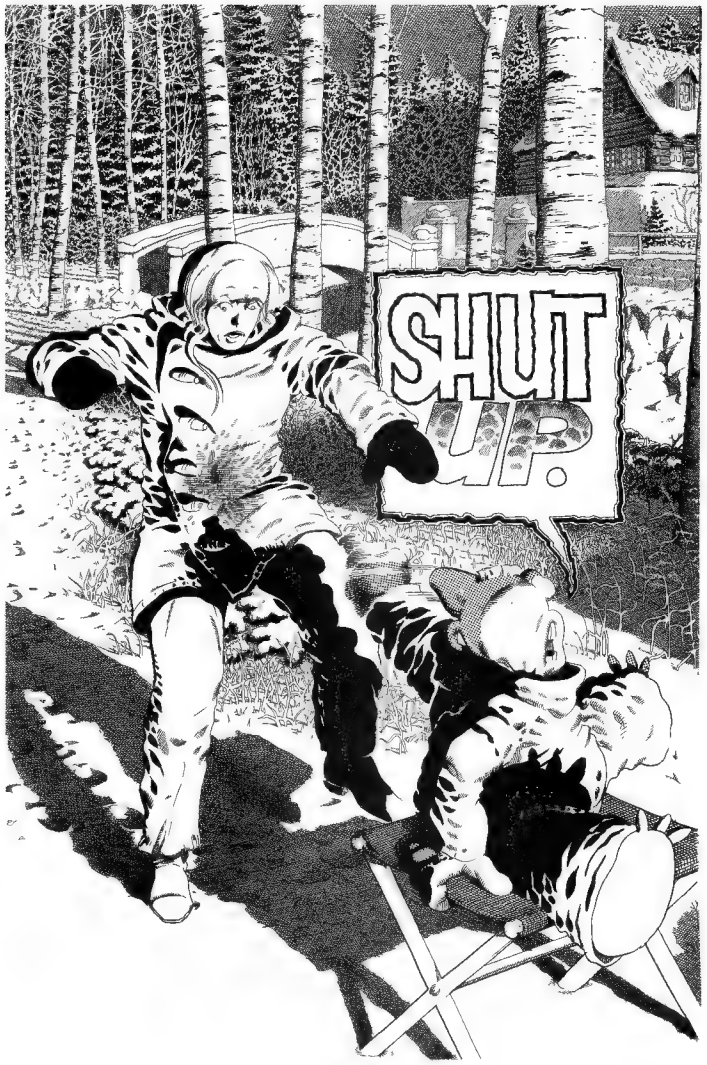
IT SEEMED AS IF CEREBUS AND HAM HAD ALWAYS BEEN TOGETHER FOR THEY DID EVERYTHING ALMOST THE SAME LIKE ONE PERSON WHO IS IN TWO DIFFERENT BODIES.
AS FOR INSTANCE THERE IS THE WAY IN WHICH THEY BOTH LEAN BACK SLIGHTLY ON THEIR CAMP STOOLS AND THE WAY THAT THEIR FOUR HANDS HOLD THEIR TWO BOTTLES OF GRIZZ BETWEEN THEIR FOUR LEGS.
(THEY DO NOT SAY TO EACH OTHER, "OH, LOOK HOW WE BOTH HOLD OUR BOTTLES OF GRIZZ BETWEEN OUR LEGS THE SAME!" FOR THEY BOTH SEEMED TO KNOW HOW "FUNNY-IN-A-BAD-WAY" THAT WOULD SOUND.)
(NOT "FUNNY-IN-A-GOOD-WAY" LIKE WHEN CEREBUS SAID TO HAM:
"CEREBUS' NICKNAME SHOULD BE 'EGG'-- SO HAM AND CEREBUS COULD BE HAM AND 'EGG'.")
(AND HAM HAD REJOINDERED:
Shut. The fuck. Up.
IN THAT REALLY SERIOUS VOICE HE USES WHENEVER HE IS KIDDING CEREBUS.)


ALWAYS AFTER HAM WOULD KID CEREBUS IN HIS SERIOUS VOICE, HAM AND CEREBUS WOULD GROW QUIET AND LISTEN TO THE STILLNESS,
BOTH OF THEM THINKING HOW TRULY AND GOOD IT IS TO LISTEN TO THE STILLNESS.
CEREBUS AND HAM LOVE JAKA AND MARY TRULY AND GOOD ALSO AS *WELL*, BUT NOT IN THE SAME WAY THAT MEN LOVE THE SOUND OF THE STILLNESS THAT MEN HEAR *ONLY* WHEN WOMEN ARE NOT AROUND.
BECAUSE WOMEN MAKE THEIR GABBLE GABBLE GABBLE HEN NOISES AT EACH OTHER SO THAT A MAN'S *HEAD* BEGINS TO POUND AND TO THROB
SO THAT A WOMAN SAYS TO HIM GABBLE GABBLE GABBLE WHAT'S WRONG? GABBLE GABBLE GABBLE YOU LOOK FUNNY!

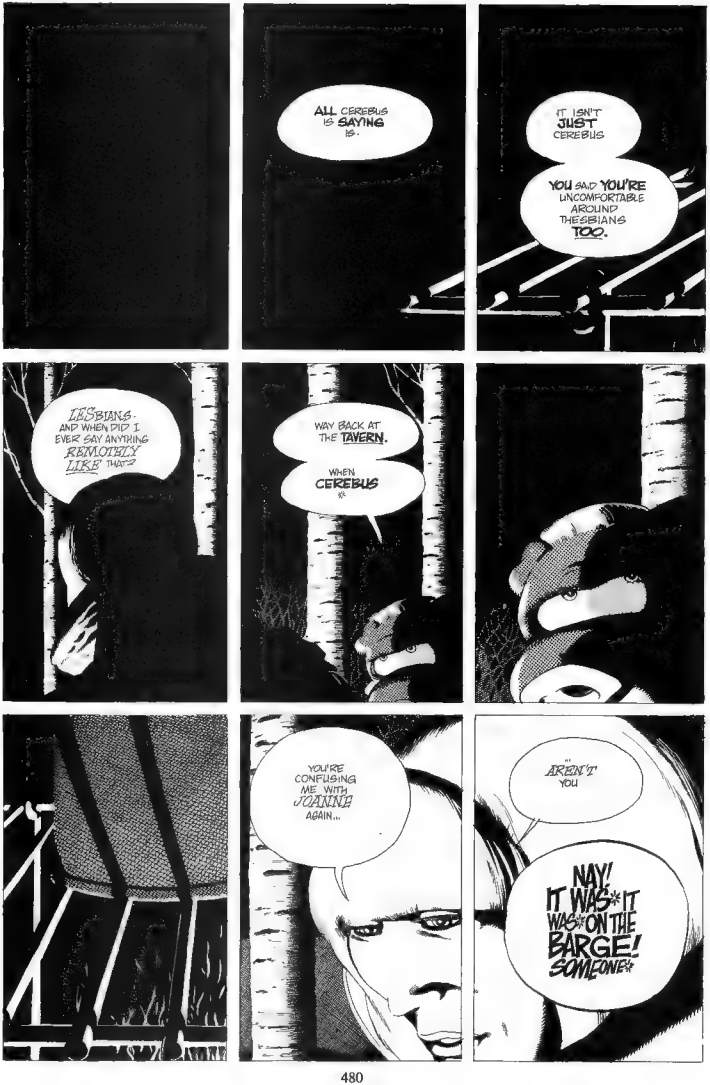

THERE SHE IS
HEH WHEN SHE GETS HERE CEREBUS WILL ASK, "SO WHAT DID THEY SAY AT THIS HUNTING LODGE?",
AND WHILE SHE IS ANSWERING: "THEY SAID THAT THEY DO NOT ALSO AS WELL ALLOW UNMARRIED COUPLES,"
CEREBUS WILL TIP HAM A WINK TO SHOW HAM THAT CEREBUS KNOWS THAT JAKA ASKING AT EACH HUNTING LODGE IS ONE OF THOSE "WOMEN THINGS",
WHERE THEY GET A "BEE IN THEIR BONNET" ABOUT SOMETHING THAT MAKES THEM WASTE EVERYONE'S TIME AND THEY WON'T LISTEN TO REASON NO MATTER WHAT


LIKE WHEN CEREBUS SAID TO JAKA "IF THE MOTHERS HAVE MADE A RULE, THEN IT IS A RULE AND THAT IS THAT"
AND JAKA SAID "WELL, IT DOES NOT HURT TO ASK."
AND CEREBUS SAID "SUIT YOURSELF," BECAUSE CEREBUS KNEW THAT JAKA WOULD ANYWAY SO CEREBUS MIGHT JUST AS WELL GIVE JAKA HIS PERMISSION.
AND WHEN HAM SEES CEREBUS TIP HIM A WINK, MAYBE HAM WILL KID AROUND WITH CEREBUS AS HAM DID LAST TIME WHEN HAM SAID TO CEREBUS:
You do that again? And I will beat the living SHIT out of you.
I'm BAAACK!♪
HUH?
OH!
heHeh
SO!
WHAT DID THEY SAY AT THIS HUNTING LODGE?

NOOO PROBLEM ♪
HA HA!
NO PROBLEM. WE CAN STAY THERE TONIGHT IF WE WANT TO
BUT...
...BUT...
I KNOW, I KNOW! BUT I WAS TALKING TO THE CARETAKER AND SHE SAID ALL WE HAVE TO DO IS SIGN A PIECE OF PAPER SAYING THAT WE'RE LESBIANS
IT NEVER OCCURRED TO ME BEFORE BUT -- THIS TIME -- FOR SOME REASON I JUST ASKED:
"WITH THE 'UNMARRIED COUPLE RULE?"
"WOULD IT MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE ?"
"...THAT CEREBUS HAS BOTH A PENIS AND A"

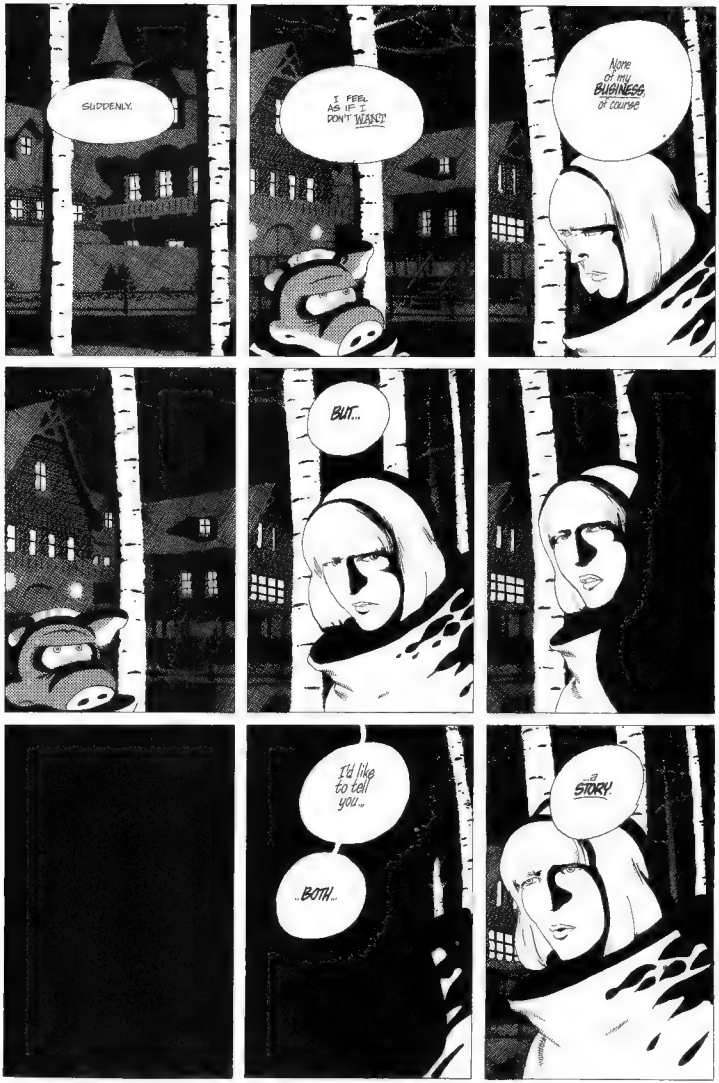

SHUT UP.

SNF?
?
ASLEEP!
WHEW!
WHAT LUCK! THAT MEANS HE DIDN'T
...HEAR...
STOMP
...JAKA...
STOMP
STOMP
FLIP
FLAK
WOW!
CEREBUS WOULDN'T HAVE THOUGHT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO SLAM A TENT FLAP!

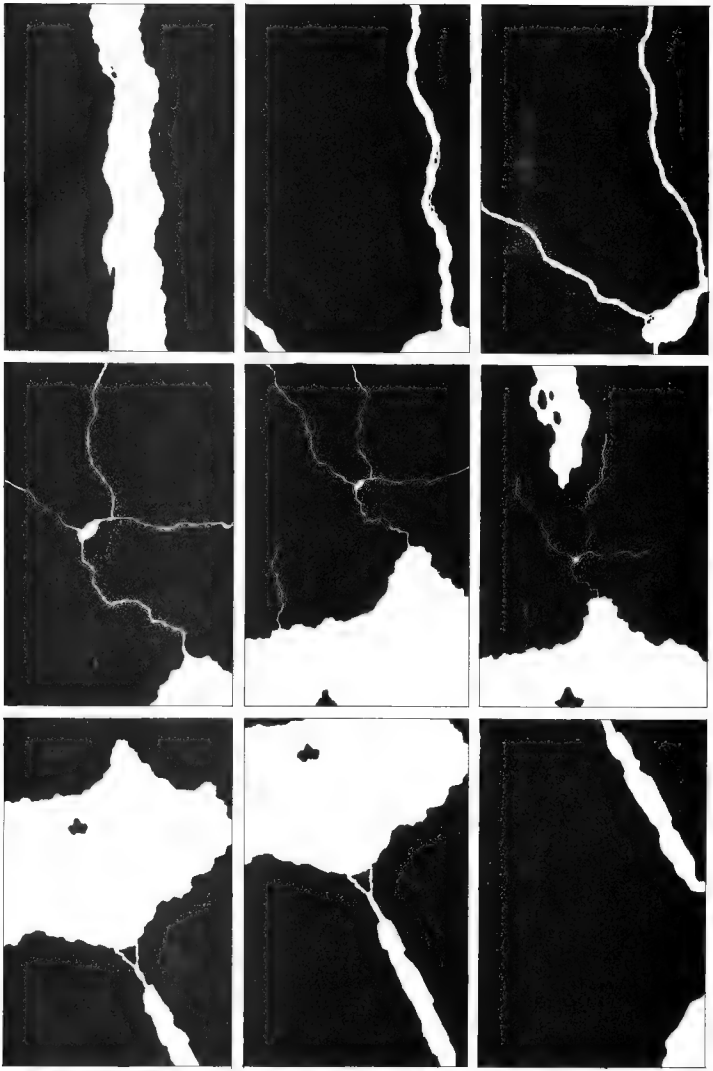

ALL CEREBUS IS SAYING IS.
IT ISN'T JUST CEREBUS
YOU SAID YOU'RE UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND THESBIANS TOO.
LESBIANS. AND WHEN DID I EVER SAY ANYTHING REMOTELY LIKE THAT?
WAY BACK AT THE TAVERN.
WHEN CEREBUS
YOU'RE CONFUSING ME WITH JOANNA AGAIN...
...AREN'T YOU
NAY! IT WAS* IT WAS* ON THE BARGE! SOMEONE*

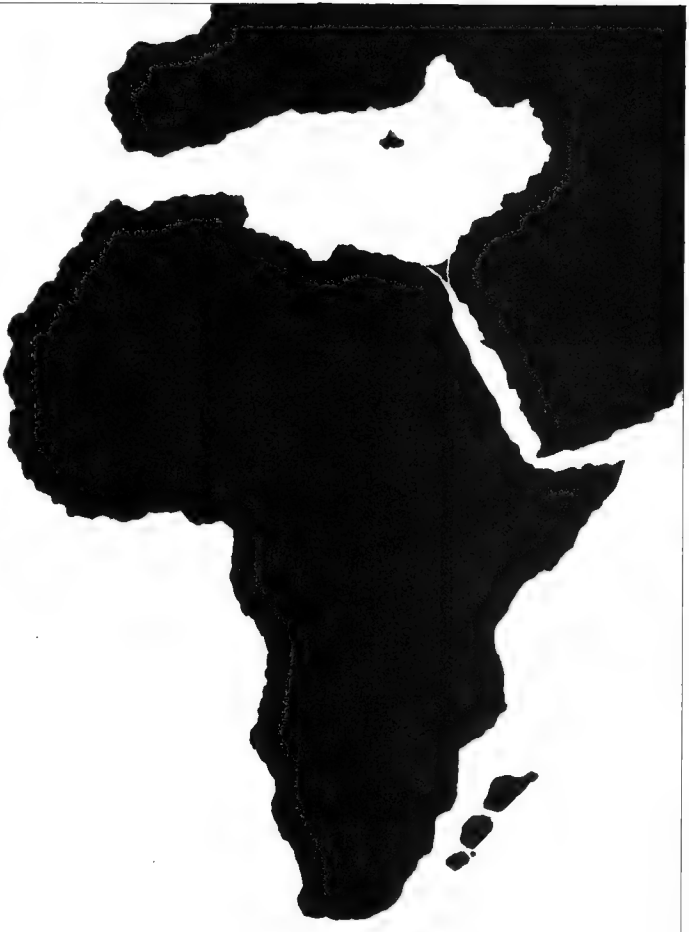
ON!
THE!
TWITCH

I DON'T SEE A VAGINA AS SOMETHING TO BE ASHAMED OF
OR BEING A LESBIAN FOR THAT MATTER
I DON'T SEE BEING A LESBIAN AS SOMETHING TO BE ASHAMED OF
I THOUGHT YOU'D LAUGH
I THOUGHT YOU'D TREAT IT AS A BILLY JOKE
"CEREBUS AND JAKA, THE HUNTING LODGE LESBIANS!"
INSTEAD...
INSTEAD I FEEL AS IF I DON'T KNOW YOU
AND WHAT'S MORE


SUDDENLY,
I FEEL AS IF I DON'T WANT
None of my BUSINESS, of course
BUT...
I'd like to tell you...
...BOTH...
...a STORY.

A TRUE story...
...that happened to me and HAM...
a long,
LONG
way from here





# TO HAM & HAM NOT

Page 467 - When I was collaborating with other artists on short back-up stories in *Swords of Cerebus*, I wanted to do one with Barry Windsor-Smith, who was and is a big influence on my work. I would discuss Barry's work here, but Barry—to me—is a great artist and so deserves better than to be "typed about" by someone who is pretending that he had a few too many margaritas at the Floridita last night.

I called Barry on the telephone and suggested that we work "Marvel-style," that is, that he would pencil the story and I would write and letter it from his pencils. The idea that I gave to him came from a story which I had heard about Leonardo da Vinci. The story was that, in his old age, Leonardo used to terrify his nurses by inflating sheep's bladders as one would inflate a balloon, blowing them up until they filled his bedroom and crowded out his nurses. I told Barry that it was interesting to me that Leonardo, who was all of his life obsessed with the possibility of "manned flight" (this taking place in the Renaissance and, thus, well before our own time, it is permissible to call it "manned flight" instead of "personned flight" or "manned and womynned flight"), would have missed so completely the obvious—hot-air balloons—even when he was holding the idea in the form of a sheep-bladder-metaphor in the palm of his hand. I sketched out very roughly and verbally a story idea where Cerebus would encounter a Leonardo-like figure assembling his own hot-air balloon, which he had just invented.

When next I spoke with Barry, he was chagrined (being a verb which can only be used accurately when you are describing an English person). Barry was chagrined with his efforts on the story in that it was already many pages long (!!!!) and it did not, in his view, appear to be going anywhere. To *Barry* it did not appear to be going anywhere. To *me*, it was an unpublished Barry Windsor-Smith-pencilled Cerebus story and so it was just fine as it was and should be sent to me as soon as possible while Barry finished it. Barry demurred (a verb which also is a verb which can only be used accurately when you are describing what an English person does when he is completely and definitively chagrined). Instead, Barry came up with the wonderful and delightful "Cerebus Dreams" short story, which is in the back of *Swords of Cerebus* volume five and which has nothing to do with even *dream* hot-air balloons.

Many years later, when Barry's *Storyteller* anthology came out, featuring his "The Freebooters" serial (*Storyteller* in general and "Freebooters" in particular being too wonderful to describe in "margarita-speak"), I thought that I recognized, from my memory of it, his description of parts of the stillborn Cerebus back-up story in the first few pages. Among many delightful details, these pages featured two scantily clad young women in a very imaginative "airship" that appeared to be part-boat and part-dirigible (this, possibly, being a veiled reference to a night when I and two young women—later characterized as "floozies" by Barry—actually dragged Barry to the famous New York City disco Danceteria during its hey-day, and, again, possibly not) (possibly not a veiled reference; the young women were definitely "floozies").

Anyway, having decided that the time was right for primitive "manned flight" to make its debut in Cerebus's world, I have chosen to *repossess* Barry's airship concept (and have Gerhard reconfigure the whole thing with steam power added truly and good into the bargain as well), since said debut would have been prefigured by many, many years if Barry had just stuck to my original idea. If the first few pages of "The Freebooters" did *not* originate with the stillborn *Swords* back-up story, then using Barry's airships constitutes outright thievery on my part, and I beg Barry's indulgence in the matter (which is something that also as well you do only with English people).

*******

In one of those strange bits of synchronous occurrence, which Barry is documenting in his multi-volumed OPUS series of Art books/memoirs, I have just today, April 24, with the completion of this section of "To Ham and Ham Not," received in the mail from Barry the original painting he did for the front cover of *Swords* volume five. He must have sensed someone sniffing around his airships even at a distance of five hundred miles. Thank you again, Barry!

Pages 471-472 - Ngui and Charo dialogue:

Charo: The weather's nice tonight.
Ngui: ?
Charo: I'm joking. The weather isn't good. It's very cold.
Ngui: Are you hungry?
Charo: Is there food?
Ngui: This.
Charo: Feh. I don't eat pig meat.
Ngui: No?
Charo: No. Prohibited. Because of my religion.
Ngui: What religion are you?
Charo: I'm a Muslim.

24 April 00 - As I approach the crux of "Form & Void," it seems time to clear out the last of my Hemingway loose ends. I gather all my scraps of paper and photocopies and my first Hemingway notebook. I begin to sift through them for the points that I wish to make, truly and good. One of the first that I come across is from *The True Gen*, where Denis Brian asks John Hemingway, the eldest son, if his father had been eager

to hear of John Hemingway's adventures during World War II (John Hemingway had been a prisoner in a German POW camp):

*Oh, yes. They were coming out in bits and pieces. I think partly because of the starvation diet as a prisoner, details were very hard to remember then and even now aren't all that clear. We had an Australian lieutenant-colonel with us, a surgeon, who had been captured at Tobruk. He was a very fine old fellow and made sure the Geneva Convention was adhered to. He used to tell us, "I say, you chaps, you may have a bit of trouble with your memory as the diet is rather short on phosphorous. You may find yourselves repeating things. Don't let it worry you. As soon as you get back on a decent diet you won't have any problems." Then he'd go out and come back about half an hour later and repeat the whole thing.*

The wit of such a story seems lost in the morass of tedious anecdotes which make up any biographical work about Hemingway

*******

The uncompleted work which was released posthumously as *Islands in the Stream* contains an extended sequence where Roger falls in love with a woman with whom he travels across country. Certain details indicate that she is based on Mary Welsh before she became Mary Hemingway. Small wonder that the sequence did not make it into the "finished" Widow-Queen-sanctioned *Islands in the Stream,* with Hemingway/Roger's introspections such as this:

*Then later she said, "Roger."*
*"Yes, daughter."*
*"Are you sure?"*
*"Yes, daughter."*
*"And you're not disappointed because of anything?"*
*"No, daughter."*
*"Do you think you'll get to love me?"*
*"I love you," he lied. I love what we did* [having sex] *he meant.*
*"Say it again."*
*"I love you," he lied again.*
*"Say it once more."*
*"I love you," he lied.*
*"That's three times," she said, in the dark. "I'll try to make it come true."*

The sequence was eventually published as "The Strange Country" in the "Finca Vigia" collection of Hemingway's short stories after the death of the Widow Queen when the rights to Hemingway's stories passed to his sons (where the rights belonged in the first place, if you ask me).

*******

From Carlos Baker's biography, discussing the same time period before Mary Welsh became Mary Hemingway:

*He was too gregarious or too haunted, or both, to enjoy being alone unless he was writing, as he was still unable to do. He told Mary that he was planning to read Thoreau, who always revelled in solitude. His own problem, however, was that he did not wish to live by himself. He was not impatient for Mary's arrival, said he: he was merely desperate.*

No further questions, your honour.

*******

The full "great careerist" quote from Gore Vidal's essay, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Case":

*...midway through the thirties, the Spanish Civil War politicized most of the new writers, and many of the old. Predictably, Ernest Hemingway rode out the storm, going triumphantly from the bad play* The Fifth Column *to the bad novel* For Whom the Bell Tolls *(Fitzgerald's comment: "a thoroughly superficial book with all the profundity of* Rebecca*"). Nevertheless, with characteristic panache, the great careerist managed to keep himself atop the heap at whose roomy bottom Fitzgerald had now taken up permanent residence.*

The designation of Hemingway as a careerist came to Vidal by way of Gertrude Stein, who will be dealt with in due course. Patience, dear reader, patience.

*******

Also from Carlos Baker's biography:

*The old war was so much in his mind that he made a special trip to the site of his wounding thirty years before. From the much rebuilt, redestroyed, and dingy town of Fossalta, he drove out along the sunken road that gave the place its name. The miles of old earthworks along the riverbank had long since been filled in and grassed over in a complex of protective dykes. Reeds rustled in the wind along the edges of the river. In the valley behind one of the dykes stood a long, low, yellow house that had been there in 1918—perhaps the same that Ernest had recalled and used in 'A Way You'll Never Be.' He came upon what he took to be the very crater ('like a designed depression in a golf-course') which was all that remained of the dugout where the trench-mortar projectile had exploded. He would have liked to accomplish a ceremonious defaecation. Finding this impossible, he dug a small hole with a stick and inserted a 1,000-lire note. This home-made symbolism was meant to indicate that he had contributed both blood and money to*

*the Italian soil. That evening he returned to Venice, as Mary said, 'wiser and jubilant.'*

There are times when my head fairly throbs with the strain of trying to understand how defaecation can be described as "ceremonious" (according to my dictionary, "Given to ceremony; *studiously or overly polite*") or how—granting the oxymoron (which I don't)—either a ceremonious defaecation or burying a 1,000-lire note could make one either "wiser" or "jubilant." Who *ARE* these people? *WHAT* are these people?

*******

I am not a hunter myself. I am not *opposed* to hunting (in the sense that I would not, you know, hurl myself bodily between someone with a rifle and his Bambi du jour), but I tend to agree with those who see hunting as being too one-sided to actually be called hunting. If the animal has antlers and I have a rifle, I call that "hunting." Until some way is devised of outfitting game animals with rifles or handguns, anything more lethal than a spear or a javelin or a knife strikes me as strange play-acting. "Hunting" rather than hunting or Hunting. Hemingway's view, which he gave in *Death in the Afternoon*:

*When a man is still in rebellion against death he has pleasure in taking to himself one of the God-like attributes: that of giving it.*

An honest difference of opinion, I suppose, although I would consider any notion of a man taking on *any* "God-like attributes" as being so foolish as to be beyond the pale of intellectual opinion and well into the realm of malignant self-exaltation. This entry from Baker's biography (page 354) on the subject of Hemingway's first bear hunt in 1936 still makes my gorge rise, starting with:

*The other two grizzlies ran back towards the forest and Ernest killed one of them with a slug behind the shoulder. The first now scrambled up,* bleeding and bawling, *and made for cover. Ernest ran to intercept it and killed it with a shot to the neck just as it lumbered up the bank of a stream.* [emphasis mine]

Followed by:

*He (Hemingway) insisted on a lunch of bear steaks. Tom and young Patrick never afterwards forgot that meal. The meat was rank and stringy, cooked middling rare, and eaten in the form of sandwiches made from sour-dough pancakes spread with orange marmalade. But Ernest consumed his portion with evident gusto, chewing long and appreciatively, his black beard glossy with bear fat.*

*******

Then, there are these two fragments—the first from Carlos Baker's biography with Marlene Dietrich (pre-Grandma the Babysitter days), waxing enthusiastic about a poem that Papa wrote about the deaths of sixty-seven members of Buck Lanham's 22nd Infantry Regiment on September 13 and 14, 1944:

*"Papa," she would say, gazing at him with her large and melancholy eyes,* "I don't care what you do *since you wrote that poem."* [emphasis mine]

The second is from Hotchner's *Papa Hemingway,* as Hemingway gives Hotchner the manuscript for *The Old Man and the Sea* to read during one of Hotchner's visits to Finca Vigia:

*"Wanted you to read something," he said. "Mary read it all one night and in the morning said* she forgave me for anything I'd ever done *and showed me the real goose flesh on her arms. So have been granted a sort of general amnesty as a writer."* [again, emphasis mine]

Palpitated another woman on another occasion: "Forgive him everything. He writes like an angel." There is something both peculiar and prescient in this, anticipating our own degraded Feminist Age where the President of the United States is reduced to sending female cabinet members out to a Rose Garden press conference to vouch for him at the height of a sex scandal. How did it come to this? I have been moved to wonder on more than one occasion. I see the seeds of it in Hemingway. Women forgiving men on some fantastic and mythical grand scale. Women vouching for men, as if any woman's opinion of any man should mean anything to anyone.

Hemingway, it seems to me, was a kind of mascot—the literal *ass* which misguided womanhood intended riding through the streets and alleyways of a 20th century they intended to—and ultimately *did*—turn upside down to their own selfish advantage and to the disadvantage of men and civilization in general. How else to explain the raising up of a semi-literate drunkard typist to the heady plateau of a Nobel Prize in literature?

How else, indeed?

I am reasonably certain that Hemingway's reputation as *one* of the greatest—if not *the* greatest—writers of the 20th century came to us, like Gore Vidal's "great careerist" characterization, by way of the lesbian Gertrude Stein.

A frisson of horror ripples through the crowd.

One does not cojoin the adjective to the name (or The Name, as the feminists would have it) without interposing "writer" between "lesbian" and "Gertrude Stein." To do so, presumably, is to call down upon one's head a great and grave destruction, at the very least the birth of two-headed calves and babies with six fingers and six toes, the bathing of earth's lunar satellite in menstrual hues, a blight upon the crops.

The lesbian Gertrude Stein, the lesbian Gertrude Stein, the lesbian Gertrude Stein.

Better still: the Lesbian gertrude stein.

See? Nothing. Be of good cheer, feminist males and feminist females. You have nothing to fear but your own willful stupidity.

But I *am* getting ahead of myself.

## ORIGINS

I had become concerned as I devoured several hundreds of pages of Papa's moronic short stories, all of his novels, his *Selected Letters*, biographies, magazine articles. Concerned because it was getting on for the time when I was supposed to start *drawing* "Form & Void," and—apart from the Cerebus and Jaka elements which had been in place for some years—I could find nothing to interest me as I began to sculpt, mentally, Ham Ernestway.

Having sex with his cat?

A good sight gag—a GREAT sight gag, actually—but hardly worth the damage that would be done to the story in deflecting the readers' attention from what I was and am trying to say.

No, "Bedtime with Boise" would have to be left to the pseudo-scholarly confines of "To Ham & Ham Not."

I kept returning to the foundational structure of *Going Home*—the two "love" triangles.

The first, with Jaka as the central figure (the "Guinevere role," as I've come to name it) and Cerebus and F. Scott Fitzgerald as the "other two" (King Arthur and Lancelot, respectively). The second, with someone else as Lancelot, Cerebus as Guinevere, and Jaka as King Arthur.

I had trouble getting it to work.

Given the twenty years that I had devoted to establishing that there is no other woman for Cerebus if Jaka is around—whom could I introduce who would be capable of dividing his attentions the way that F. Stop Kennedy would divide Jaka's? The only answer was someone from Cerebus's solo masculine past—a good army buddy of some kind. Someone who represented a world near and dear to Cerebus's heart and yet as foreign to Jaka as the world of art and Art was near and dear to Jaka's heart and yet foreign to Cerebus.

The Answer was Bear. The Problem was, I had already *used* Bear.

After a certain amount of thought, another answer presented itself: "Bear's Bear," someone whom Bear looked up to the way Cerebus looked up to Bear. That would do it. And Hemingway seemed to fit the bill—Hemingway who had been lurking around the periphery of the role as I kept running across him in my Fitzgerald research. The only problem, then, was that I couldn't picture Cerebus and Hemingway interacting. Bear's Bear just put the individual on such a rarefied plateau in Cerebus's mental "pecking order" that I couldn't picture Cerebus doing much more than stammering and quaking and…

…and that was when I came up with Cerebus-the-Ham-Ernestway-Fanboy, which presented a lot of comedic possibilities and transformed the "love triangle" into the "broken triangle": Cerebus just wants to graft himself onto Ham Ernestway, Ham Ernestway just wants to get into Jaka's pants and can't stand Cerebus, Jaka can't stand Ham Ernestway and loves Cerebus. I have certainly had more than enough experience with each of those roles, both participating and observing, so that I could just put it on a mental back-burner as I devoted myself to finishing "Fall and the River," secure that I now had the "Form & Void" surface story taken care of.

The surface story is the readily accessible, crowd-pleaser part of *Cerebus* which houses the sight gags, the puns, the "who gets the girl?" clichés and stereotypes, the Frank Capra moments. All the stuff that either makes you go "Hahaahaa" or "Awwww—that's so CUUuuuUUUte" or "boohoohoo, that's so sad" or "boohoohoo, that's so beautiful" or "boohoohoo, that's so touching." In addition to the *surface* story there is the *actual* story. You know, the part of every *Cerebus* book where you're sure that I've lost my mind because I was doing such a good job of making you go "hahaha" or ""awwww" or "boohoohoo I", "boohoohoo II" or "boohoohoo III" and all of a sudden everything just makes you go "Hunh?!" "Hmmm," if I'm lucky and we happen to be on the same wavelength—but, mostly, "Hunh!?" or "Whaaat?" or "WHAAT?" for pages and pages at a time. That—believe it or not, friends—is the actual story. And contained in the actual story is the core moment. As an example, in "Fall and the River," the *actual* story was the Maury Noble monologue on top of the stateroom, and the *core moment* was—well, it gets referred to again in the last *Cerebus* story line, so you'll know for sure, then, okay?

So, what I was looking for in my Hemingway research was something that I could use as the actual story—some Hemingway version of the Maury Noble monologue in Fitzgerald's *The Beautiful and Damned*.

Well, as I found in the course of my research, there is nothing in Hemingway's writing that matches that description. It is *all* surface story—a mile wide and a quarter of an inch deep. Those things that Hemingway clearly *thinks* are Great Literary Moments…

…you know that cliché about great sex, "the earth moved"? Hemingway came up with that in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. That was the part of the book I was making fun of with the stadium full of monkeys all typing truly and good and good and truly. At the "spooey" moment, in *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, we are informed that "the earth moved" in such a reverential way that Hemingway clearly thinks that he is imparting one of the Great Secrets of the Universe. Even sillier, he had probably been carrying the thing around since it happened to him—an outdoor "piece" with first wife, Hadley?—knowing that it would be installed on its velveteen pillow at the epicenter of *Papa's Answer to War and Peace* when The Time Was Right…

…well, I beg to differ, to say the least.

There *is* the very occasional vivid description that has real resonance to it. Like this (in Hemingway's case) *rare* gem from *To Have and Have Not*, as the

bullet-riddled, corpse-strewn boat returns to port:

*...from the long seat alongside the starboard gunwale, a man seemed to be leaning over to dip his hand into the sea. His head and arms were in the sun and at the point where his fingers almost touched the water, there was a school of small fish, about two inches long, oval-shaped, golden-colored, with faint purple stripes, that had deserted the gulf weed to take shelter in the shade the bottom of the drifting launch made in the water, and each time anything dripped down into the sea, these fish rushed at the drop and pushed and milled until it was gone. Two gray sucker fish about eighteen inches long, swam round and round the boat in the shadow in the water, their slit mouths on the tops of their flat heads opening and shutting; but they did not seem to comprehend the regularity of the drip the small fish fed on and were as likely to be on the far side of the launch when the drop fell, as near it. They had long since pulled away the ropy, carmine clots and threads that trailed in the water from the lowest splintered holes, shaking their ugly, sucker-topped heads and their elongated, tapering, thin-tailed bodies as they pulled. They were reluctant now to leave a place where they had fed so well and unexpectedly.*

I mean, yuccch. Indeed, yuccch. But there is more to it than that. It is a piece of imagery matching a hundred, a thousand, ten thousand naturally occurring events, uniting cannibalism and a nursing infant in a single keenly observed piece of imagery (it DOES?). Yes, trust me, it does.

But there wasn't enough there to make up a core moment in "Form & Void." It wouldn't bear "fluffing up." All you'd get would be "carmine clot souffle" (Everybody: YUCCCCHHHH!).

Well, I found the actual story in a most unexpected place—Mary Hemingway's *How It Was*.

As you can see from my previous references to *How It Was*, I did not have high expectations for the book, and in that I was not disappointed. This side of "nurse novels" there is no more cliché-ridden, trite, predictable, and tedious a branch of typing (make that "typing") than the "tell-all autobiography of the Woman Behind the Great Man." Like a "nurse novel," it is tailored to its audience who not only accepts but *demands* the clichés which take the place of genuine content: My Fascinating Ancestors (Men), My Fascinating Ancestors (Women), My Early Life With My Devoted Family, My Loving Mother and Father, My Fierce Streak of Independence, My Sidekick Girlfriends, I Strike Out On My Own, My Moments of Heartbreak and Fear, My Moments of Triumph and Joy (small, for I Am A Simple Girl At Heart and Small Joys Count For Much With Me). Well, I had the common sense to skip all that and flip through to And Then We Met, with all its attendant violin music and excruciating metaphors and palsied similes.

I will say that I found it less excruciating to read than Hemingway's work—the lesser of two abortions, you might say. There was enough unintentional comedy to keep me snickering every few pages, since Mary's My Fierce Streak of Independence tended to mutate into Why I've Always Been More of a Hardass Than Any Man I Ever Met Except My Beloved Lamb (HoCCChhh, *THOO!)*, and since *How It Was* was being crafted even as the Feminist Malignancy (HoCCChhh, *THOO!)* was descending upon us, Hardass Mary really gets fer to chewin' the scenery up here and thar where she (HoCCChhh, *THOO!)* sees call fer it. Like the eternal amateur reporter (who *else* would write for Luce's *Time* magazine?) she brought all her best high-school essayist skills to bear on her task. There is the "who?" sentence, followed by the "what?" sentence, followed by the "where?" sentence, followed by the "when?" sentence, followed by the "why?" sentence, followed (frequently) by HoCCChhh, *THOOO!* Hard to sustain for nearly seven hundred pages, but she is in earnest, even as Ernest is in her (sorry). There is no *interpretation* of the who, what, where, and when. The *why* is always a separate entity, as it is in any woman's writing—restatement or a paraphrase of one of the four previous self-interrogations. Women, you won't see it—but, guys, you really should check it out. Pick up any woman's idea of non-fiction writing and look for anything having to do with "Why?" or "why?" They have *no idea* what the word means. I digress.

Almost two-thirds of the way through this self-constructed, self-dedicated monument to "The Woman (That's Me, Mary) Behind the Great Man," my pulse actually jumped. I had been skimming along trying not to "get any on me" but enjoying it where I could for what it was, and I stopped.

Did I just read what I thought I just read?

I skipped back a few pages. I had, indeed. I reread the same few pages two or three times, my heart rate definitely up above normal for (as I recall) eleven o'clock at night.

Where does this go? I wondered—for the first time in my Hemingway research—genuinely curious. Not "Where is *she* going with this?" I knew better than that. *She* hasn't gone any*where* with any*thing* for well over four hundred pages. But even as I asked, "Where does this go?" I knew I was going to find out. Mary the High-School Essayist would give me all of the who, what, where, and when I needed.

The *why*, I was willing to bet, would present itself as a direct implication of the other four.